

Dave Roever speaks to personnel at NAF Atsugi

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VETERAN

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI, Japan – Only a few people were treated to the inspirational life story of a Vietnam veteran in the Main Chapel on board Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi on Nov.2.

Dave Roever told the story of how his life was nearly ended, but from a horrible tragedy came a story to encourage any who heard it.

“His life story, I found, was full of examples of honor, courage, and commitment,” said Lt. Cmdr. Robert Slaughter, command Chaplain of NAF Atsugi. “He honorably served his country and he was committed to many things.”

Roever joined the U.S. Navy and in 1969 he found himself deep in the jungles of Vietnam with the Brown Water Black Beret team. His mission was to taxi teams of men to different locations along a river in a fiberglass river boat.

On July 26, as Roever moved down the river, he found himself in the very same location where three days before he had received a minor injury during a battle with the Vietcong.

Knowing there was a bunker system in that area, he picked up a white phosphorous grenade, pulled the pin and began to aim at the banks of the river in an effort to clear the trees and brush.

“When something isn’t right, you gotta remember – don’t ignore it – and I knew something was wrong,” Roever said to the audience. “I couldn’t see him, hear him, or smell him. But I could consciously tell.”

Too long, he waited. A sniper fired at him, missing his head, but hit the grenade instead. It exploded, burning his body at 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Once taken to a proper medical facility, Roever wasn’t given much time to live. But because of the love of his wife and parents, he lived, spending 14 months in the hospital recuperating from his injuries and several surgeries, leaving him forever scarred.

He is committed to his country and to his God, said Slaughter. He is a man of courage, not only for going to war alongside some of the elite warriors of the U.S. Navy.

“He was courageous to also get through all of the surgeries and all of the social challenges that he had to face, having lost much of his face and the functionality of his hands.” Said Slaughter.

Roever started speaking in 1971. Today, he visits U.S. military installations across the world telling his story to encourage and inspire service members. Resiliency is the number one thing he hopes his listeners get from his story.

“If they can bounce back from issues in life that just knock them down, if they can get up and go again, that’s what I want them to take away.” Said Roever.

In 2003, 34 years after receiving his injuries, Roever was awarded the Purple Heart, which he wears with pride upon his lapel.

“Even when life takes an ugly turn, even in times when we’re challenged to the brink of what we think we can endure, giving up is never the answer,” said Slaughter. “But maintaining one’s faith in God, and maintaining faith in one’s self is at the core of being able to continue.”

For more information on this inspirational speaker or future speakers, please contact the Chaplain’s office at 264-3202.